DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 393 501 JC 960 202

AUTHOR McPherren, Ann; Smith, Gerald
TITLE Devising a Quality Steering Committee and Schedule.
PUB DATE Mar 96
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the North Central Association (101st, Chicago, IL, March 23-26, 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Accreditation (Institutions); *College Planning; Community Colleges; Coordinators; Educational Quality; Evaluation Needs; *Institutional Evaluation; *Organizational Objectives; *Self Evaluation (Groups); *Staff Role; Strategic Planning; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Huntington College IN

ABSTRACT

While decisions regarding institutional accreditation rest on the attributes of the entire college or university, the process used for accreditation self-studies at Huntington College, in Indiana, emphasizes the selection and role of the self-study coordinator. The coordinator is responsible for developing a realistic schedule for the process, writing and editing the resulting report, developing a vision of the entire institution, and integrating that vision with the accreditation requirements. The self-study coordinator is also involved in the selection of the six- to eight-member steering committee, composed of representatives from influential faculty and administrative bodies. The coordinator and committee should be committed to achieving the following objectives: (1) gather information about institutional resources and programs; (2) ensure that programs are supportive of the institutional mission and philosophy of education; (3) foster a climate for institutional self-assessment; (4) ensure that strategic plans are in place and being implemented; (5) ensure that assessment plans are in place and being implemented; (6) highlight needs for institutional action so that much more effective service can be delivered to students and other constituents; and (7) develop a self-study document that presents the college in a comprehensive and accurate manner. Finally, the coordinator should ensure that the committee and other faculty are fully oriented to the self-study process and aware of accreditation criteria and recommendations and concerns from earlier accreditation visits. (TGI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 393 501

Devising a Quality Steering Committee and Schedule

by

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A. McPherren

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Ann McPherren and Gerald Smith
Huntington College
2303 College Avenue
Huntington, IN 46750

JC 960 202

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Devising a Quality Steering Committee and Schedule

As senior administrators begin to woo unsuspecting faculty or staff to become self-study coordinators, they may focus on the fame and fortune sure to come at the end of the process. A successful team visit by NCA consultant-evaluators, a self-study document that leads the institution into the future, and the promise of release time to energize the coordinator are commonly offered inducements. Once a self-study coordinator has been hooked, it becomes apparent that there are a few things to do before the accolades begin. Process planning and scheduling aided the efforts of one novice coordinator at Huntington College in Indiana.

Selection of the Self-Study Steering Committee

The self-study coordinator should recognize that the responsibility for the process is largely his/her own. While the institutional accreditation decision rests on the attributes of the entire college or university, the self-study coordinator must find a way to manage the self-study process. Other faculty and staff will be interested in the process, but the crush of their assigned responsibilities likely will make them spectators in the initial stages of the process. It is therefore important to create a solid self-study steering committee to aid the efforts of the self-study coordinator.

Self-study coordinator involvement in the selection process is helpful. Persons named to the self-study steering committee should be knowledgeable about the institution, committed to committee work, and influential in institutional decision-making. Rather than loading the steering committee with many members which makes group meetings difficult to manage in length and participation, a six-eight member group will work well in many situations.

Because of the small size of the group, care should be taken in the selection of members to provide broad institutional perspective. People with a generally positive view of the institution provide more help than do outspoken or one-issue critics. The self-study process will allow for plenty of self examination and criticism without saddling the coordinator with an uncooperative work group. Those with commitment to and experience in student learning outcomes assessment are valuable members. In order to elevate the presence of the self-study process and to help push people to comply with requests for information along the way, the self-study committee may be co-chaired by the self-study coordinator and the college president or chief academic officer.

The steering committee should have representation from influential faculty and administrative bodies such as; president's/ administrative council, academic policies committee, assessment committee, and long range planning group. Careful overlapping selection may allow representation from a variety of academic disciplines as well. The integration of these groups with the self-study process is crucial to institutional data gathering, evaluation, and change. The comprehensive institutional perspectives offered by this group allow self-study objectives to impact the ongoing work of the college. While the steering committee will review NCA criteria with the goal of reaccreditation, it should commit itself to using the self-study process as a vehicle for institutional improvement.

The self-study process at Huntington College was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- to gather information about institutional resources and programs;
- to ensure that programs are supportive of institutional mission and philosophy of education;
- to foster a climate for institutional self-assessment;
- to ensure that strategic plans are in place and being implemented;
- to ensure that assessment plans are in place and being implemented;

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- to highlight needs for institutional action so that more effective service can be delivered to students and other constituents;
- to develop a self-study document that presents Huntington College in a comprehensive and accurate manner.

Scheduling the Self-Study Process

One of the first tasks of the self-study coordinator is the development of a realistic schedule for the process. The schedule should be designed with room for flexibility yet at the same time be a document that is taken seriously. A workable schedule is presented below. The self-study steering committee should be expected to meet and work in earnest over one to one and a half years beginning about two years before the visit. As a general guideline, the greater the level of involvement by campus personnel in actual self-study preparation, the longer the timeline for completion of the study. A benefit of the smaller 6-10 member steering committee is the relative ease of arranging meetings, gaining participation and receiving feedback on both the process and the document.

Another suggestion for an accelerated self-study schedule is to use the self-study coordinator as writer and editor of the study. One of the drawbacks of this rather centralized process is the possible lack of process awareness by other campus constituents. If such a centralized process is chosen, the crossover membership between the steering committee and other campus bodies is essential. The use of the self-study coordinator as writer and editor of the document has benefits in schedule compliance and in the production of a cohesive document. As mentioned earlier, the self-study coordinator has the greatest responsibility for and interest in the process. The coordinator must have or develop a vision of the entire institution and integrate that vision with the NCA requirements. The self-study coordinator and other writers will find themselves performing many re-writing and editing tasks with the already existing institutional documents and responses to requests for information. Why have several writers re-write and edit only to end up with a repetitive/lacking, stylistically awkward study? The steering committee should assist in editing content areas for misstatements and an English professor or another wordsmith should be enlisted to proofread.

Institutional Orientation

Several other aspects of the process deserve mention. Steering committee members and other faculty should be fully oriented to the self-study process and the NCA criteria for accreditation early in the process. Many institutions will have not undergone a NCA review for 10 years. While old-timers may be relatively attune to the process, many in the community are not. Even old-timers need an update on the areas of focus for the visit. Orientation should not be restricted to steering committee members. An important aspect to the successful project is the cooperation of the campus community in gathering data and preparing the campus for review. A meeting of the faculty senate, faculty departmental meetings and distribution of NCA criteria with requests for program information provide opportunities to heighten faculty awareness, input and assistance.

A step by step in-depth discussion of NCA criteria by the steering committee provides an organizational framework by which to conduct the institutional assessment. During the discussion of each criteria, steering committee members will generate a list of pertinent institutional documents, programs, processes and contact people. While much of the self-study document focuses on current activities and plans for the future, the steering committee must review past failures and successes as a part of the process. In particular, concerns cited in the most recent NCA Report of A Visit should be reviewed in light of current NCA criteria. Obviously, the recommendations and concerns from a prior visit should not be news to campus leaders and action/programs/policies should already be in place. Ongoing issues such as budget

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

needs, enrollment/retention issues or student learning outcomes assessement may continue to be focal points for review. The steering committee should be well versed in these issues.

One of the sometimes overlooked opportunities presented by the NCA review is the chance for faculty and staff to take advantage of professional development workshops and conferences. The prospect of a broad institutional review often encourages faculty and administrators to feel the need to bone up on one or another area. Self-study coordinators and steering committee members may be the principal beneficiaries of an increased administrative openness to funding attendance at conferences on assessing student achievement, collaboration, faculty development and evaluation, long range planning, etc. Self-study coordinators should foster this spirit of development and push for budget funds for these activities.

No substitute for planning and organization exists. Not only does the implementation of these functions help foster a successful self-study, the self-study coordinator's stress level drops to a more manageable level. Coordinators should also be assured that there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Much expertise and relevant research already are in existence in the institution. A plan for data gathering and a presentation strategy makes the overwhelming seem almost possible.

Self-Study Timetable

Activity	Months prior to Visit
Appointment of Self-Study Coordinator Initial review of NCA Self-Study documents	27
Appointment of the Self-Study Steering Committee	24
Orientation of Self-Study Steering Committee to NCA Criteria Review of preliminary self-study timetable	23
Self-Study plan submitted to North Central	20
Review of NCA documents, previous self-study and NCA Report of a Visit by steering committee	18-22
Participation by Self-Study Steering Committee members in relevant off campus conferences (NCA, AAHE , Assessment)	18-22
Completion of self-study team objectives	16-18
Appointment of task forces to tackle specific areas of concern Charge to academic departments to supply needed information regarding programs and assessment outcomes Steering Committee identification of institutional documents satisfying NCA Criteria, i.e. mission statement, philosophy of education, institutional objectives and goals, human, financial and physical resources necessary to accomplish the institution's purpose, assessment programs, long-range planning, integrity	16-18
Major program changes and distinctives due to NCA Self-Study Coordinator	12
Self-Study Coordinator review of institutional Annual Reports	10-12
Self-Study Coordinator meetings with administrative departments directed particularly at Criteria fulfillment Self-Study Coordinator prepares initial draft of self-study Self-Study Steering Committee review of self-study drafts	4-10
Final Self-Study draft to NCA	2